

McCobb-Hill-Minott House  
Parker Head Road  
approx. 1/4 mile east of Me.  
Rt. 209 (Phippsburg Center)  
Phippsburg  
Sagadahoc County  
Maine

HABS No. ME-117

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12-PRIP  
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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Washington Planning and Service Center  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## MCCOBB-HILL-MINOTT HOUSE

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Location: East side of Parker Head Road; approximately 1/4 mile east of Me. Rte. 209; Phippsburg (Phippsburg Center) Sagadahoc County, Maine.

Present Owner and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Frederick M. Haggett

Present Use: Residence

Statement of Significance: This structure was built in 1773-74 by James McCobb, a wealthy landowner and trader. Mark L. Hill, first U.S. Congressman from this area lived in the house from 1782-1842. It was purchased in 1854 by Charles V. Minott.

The house is an outstanding example of a pre-revolutionary mansion, exceptionally well-detailed and finely proportioned.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Built for James McCobb. Inherited by Mark Langdon Hill, stepson of James McCobb. Owned by M.L. Hill until death in 1842. Rented by estate until 1853. Bought by Charles V. Minott, 1854. Inherited by Charles V. Minott, Jr.. Inherited by present owners, Frederick M. Haggett and Ada Catherine Minott Haggett.
2. Date of erection: 1773-74. Dates of tradition agree (see sources infra).
3. Architect: Isaac Packard. Said to have been built by Boston 'mechanics' employed for the purpose at the behest of James McCobb's second wife. (Source: Mary Pelham Hill, editor of "Phippsburg, Maine - Vital Records," and great-granddaughter of Mark L. Hill as recorded in notes of Charles V. Minott, Jr., see infra.) A receipt in the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick M. Haggett states the following: "Georgetown August 19 1775 then Rec'd: of James McCobb one hundred an twenty/pounds lawful money in full for Building his houfe/and in full for all amounts between him and me/Rec'd by me Isaac Packard"

5. Alterations and additions: Ell was built in 1870 to replace an older one. Stairway, balusters and newel post not original, appear to be 19th century. Kitchen remodeled recently. Cupola looks post-revolutionary (proportions and detail more delicate and attenuated than rest of house).
6. Important old views: Freehand map of area in 1794 (Mass. State House) shows cupola and not ell. Map dated 1840 (Lincoln County Courthouse, Wiscasset) shows cupola.

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B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The house was for James McCobb, a wealthy landowner and trader, and was the finest house in the area. He married three times. Twin daughters and a son, Thomas, b. 1778, were born of the second wife, while the third brought a stepson, Mark Langdon Hill. James McCobb died in 1788 leaving the house to his third wife. Thomas later went to sea and when he returned found his step-brother, Mark had married his sister and the house was settled on them. In spite he built a finer house nearby, the "Spite House" (now moved by sea to Dead Man's point, Rockport, Maine, by Donald P. Dodge). Mark L. Hill first Representative from district to U.S. Congress. Lived in house 60 yrs. Minotts built many ships in yards formerly near the house, and were actively engaged in this business until 1917.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Interviews with Mrs. Frederick M. Haggett (Ada Catherine Minott) and her notes based on notes by her father, Charles V. Minott, Jr. (born 1867), from written and oral sources.
2. Published sources: Mary Meeker Cramer and Isabel Currier. "The Spite House," Down East, the Magazine of Maine. September 1960, p. 24 ff. (Accredited to Martha Kingsbury, Maine, August 1965).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This structure is an outstanding example of a pre-revolutionary mansion built by a wealthy landowner and trader. It is exceptionally well-detailed and finely proportioned. This survey is limited to the eighteenth century portion of the structure and does not include the nineteenth century ell.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent, with minor modifications in original structure.

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B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 40'- 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 46'-9"; two stories; with two-storied ell (1870)
2. Foundations: Exterior foundations are of semi-dressed rubble and rag-stone. Miscellaneous steel pipe columns, hewn and sawed beams. The removal of the original north chimney and fireplace foundation (1915) caused the house to settle and require reworking. The remaining original chimney and fireplace foundation has arched brick opening.
3. Wall construction: Exterior walls of old and new clapboards, lapped ends with feathered joints, rusticated wooden quoins about 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. Owner reports brick and clay infilling in at least one wall (north). Wooden board sheathing with feathered edges.
4. Framing: Undetermined.
5. Stoops and bulkheads: Stone steps at both entrances, exterior entrance to cellar through modern gabled appendage. Access to modern fall-out shelter from cellar.
6. Chimneys: Two enclosed brick chimneys, north chimney rebuilt with one flue for heater. Modern brick caps.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Southeast doorway: Fluted pilasters at each jamb, dentil course in entablature and pediment. Door (said to be original) has four panels, top two glazed (2 lights each) with cross at diagonal in lower half. Mortise and tenon, dowel fasteners, door 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick.  
  
Northwest doorway: Opening has pilasters at jamb, "crossette" motif at entablature, broken cornice, simple pediment. Four panes of "bulls-eye" glass at head, six panels in "witch door". Door mortise and tenon, dowel fasteners, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " thick.
  - b. Windows and shutters: Six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash, thin muntins and meeting rails, exterior louvered shutters, window frames project 3" from clapboards, window sills project 3" past jambs. Molded cornice with cap. Birch bark flashing at windows (reported by owner).
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hipped roof, asphalt shingles, ori-

ginally wooden shingles.

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- b. Cornice, eaves: Projecting boxed cornice incorporates gutter.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, etc.: Square cupola is centered on roof; has two-over-two-light double-hung sash, modillioned cornice, hipped roof, wooden quoining. No evidence to indicate cupola is not contemporary with structure.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement (locally referred to as cellar): Basement originally had flag stone and earth floor. One large space with one cubicle referred to as Judge Hill's wine cellar. Owner is troubled with ground water.
  - b. First floor: Central stair hall and back hall extend through house. South room is traditional parlor; west room is traditional dining room; east room was used as study, office, or den; north room used as winter kitchen, stairways to basement and to second floor, access to ell. China closet-pantry between kitchen and present dining room (1915).
  - c. Second floor: Central stair hall, four rooms symmetrical to stair hall, bathroom at rear of hall. Stair off north room (traditional nursery) leads to kitchen.
  - d. Attic: Roof framing exposed, modified king post trusses; peg fasteners. This space traditionally quarters for slaves favoured by McCobb. Access to cupola by ladder.
2. Stairways: Central straight-run of 18 risers stairway to second floor originally continued to attic; 6½" risers, 13" treads, moulded railing, three turned balusters per tread. Turned newel. Nursery stair is "L" shaped with winders. Basement stairway is straight-run.
3. Flooring: Wooden floors, varnished and/or painted; boards of various widths, some modern plastic covering.
4. Walls and ceiling finish: Paper on plaster. Plaster has hair binder, some on accordion, or split, wooden lath. Paneled wooden wainscot in major first-floor rooms, and stair halls. Ceilings plastered.

5. Doorways and doors: Simple wooden trim, arch in panel at head of door between front hall and back hall on first floor. Four, six, and eight panel wooden doors with mortise and tenon joints with dowel fasteners. HABS ME
6. Decorative features and trim: 12-Philip 1-
  - a. Fireplace walls in all rooms paneled, South room first floor has elaborate cornice with dentil course, fluted Doric pilasters on plinths at each side of fireplace opening and at extremities of fireplace wall. "Crossetted" panel above fireplace. Upper corners of fireplace are "crossetted." False doors at each side.
  - b. Interior shutters: Shutters paneled on exterior; double-hinged, fold against reveal and trim; recess for shutter bars in jambs of each window.
  - c. Plaster center-piece in ceiling in southeast room.
7. Notable hardware: Box locks on two exterior doors, one wooden and one metal (in workable condition). Old cast-iron door knockers, old thumb latches with elaborate plates, variety of H and HL hinges, some with leather washers.
8. Lighting: Modern electric; two oil lamps found in house and installed by present owner are converted to electricity.
9. Heating: Four fireplaces that operate. Modern steam heating system throughout.

D. Site:

1. Location: Parker Head Road in Phippsburg Center, on hill overlooking Kennebunk River and west of Phippsburg Center Congregational Church; faces southeast.
2. Enclosures: None.
3. Outbuildings: 19th century ell replaces earlier one. Modern fall-out shelter under right front.
4. Landscaping: Three English linden trees at southeast entrance planted 1774. Miscellaneous stone slab walks.

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